WRESTLING THEN & NOW

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Lord Blears

THE LISTENING POST
BY: EVAN GINZBURG

It seems like so very long ago, but I remember a glorious time when I'd go to three cards a month, and enjoy them all. In the hard wrestling times of 1992, such an event is not only unlikely, it borders on the impossible.

The WWWF of the 70's and early 80's featured an A, B & C circuit that ran monthly. The Garden was truly the mecca of professional wrestling, before the expression became just another cliche oozing from the ultimate shill (next to Bill Cosby of course!), Gorilla Monsoon. You had "made it" if you appeared in the Garden, and you were really "hot" if you were flown in for a one-shot. Although many main-events were recycled time & time again (just how many times did George Steele wrestle Bruno over the years? Hundreds I'd guess.), the Garden cards were generally phenomenal and each one felt like an EVENT.

The Nassau Coliseum shows were clearly the "B circuit." After Bruno polished off an opponent at MSG, they'd book a rematch at Nassau. They'd rarely draw well, there was clearly less heat, and the undercards were not on the level of the MSG's show either. Yet there was always a sense of fun, and even comraderie as the very same fans usually attended each month. Besides, when Johnny Rodz was on the card, he was always good for a hot opener! There was, however, a clear change in booking philosophy during SuperStar Graham's reign, as he faced many wrestlers that he did NOT wrestle at the Garden. This resulted in some GREAT matches, such as a 20 minute classic with Tony Garea. It also resulted in some real duds- including a 29 second Countout win over Haystacks Calhoun and some quickies with Zybysko & Strongbow. It was nonetheless exciting to see some different match-ups, and regardless of the opponent, Graham had charisma to spare. Generally Ivan Putski would appear in the co-feature, and although the vast majority of his matches bordered on the horrendous, he was an extremely popular face in the area, and at one time considered by a predominantly "mark" audience as unbeatable.

We'd also regularly hit the "C circuit" show as well. Sunnyside Gardens or the Westchester County Center would present 5-6 matches, the bulk of which were far from memorable. The smoky, intimate atmosphere was unbelievable, though, and every seat put you right on top of the action. One classic series at the County Center had Pat Patterson against Ted Dibiase in a feud for the North American (pre-Inter-Continental) title. One interesting memory was of Bob Backlund, just days after losing his title at MSG, beating Iron Mike Sharpe in a main-event, while feigning an arm injury (remember, manager Arnold Skaaland submitted for Bob due to an "injury" in the title loss). You didn't really need to have a great card at these places in order to have a great time, and I have many fond memories of them. Sunnyside is now a Wendy's, and it is located blocks from where I now teach English as a Second Language. Westchester County Center is still a WWF C circuit arena, although the matches are no longer monthly, and sitting in close proximity to the ring is unappealing when little if anything going on in said ring is of any interest to me.

Although it seems like a lifetime ago, there was a wonderful time when I had the opportunity to enjoy wrestling on almost a weekly basis. Today it's unfortunate that I have both the financial means, and the very same desire to support something I've always loved, yet there's simply so little worth seeing.

ODDS AND ENDS

I'm in the planning stages of a very special issue- RACISM IN WRESTLING. It'll be the same size & price, although the entire 10 pages will focus on this important issue, and feature black wrestlers such as Pez Whatley speaking out honestly on the subject in EXCLUSIVE interviews. I always attempt to do something different with this sheet, and am proud of what this project is evolving into it. Don't miss it!...If your subscriptions are up, renew today and support wrestling's only nostalgia sheet. We're the underdog and need your continued support! If you're not here, one day WT&N may not be either...The WT&N Annual- History of the Territories (50 pgs/100 plus clips) still available at $7...Just in- an interview with the legendary Killer Kowalski and a ton of great clips on his career. Don't miss it! Coming soon. Enjoy a new interview EVERY month in WT&N. Other upcoming interviews- Billy Anderson, Dr. Mike with Johnny Valentine and Buddy Rogers, Baby Doll, John Arezzi & many others...This go round, I'm featuring several writers who haven't appeared in WT&N in a few months. We simply get so much material, I can't run it all sometimes! All our great regulars return next issue!...

IRON MIKE EINHORN- MC SCREWDRIVER
(The Man Who Knows Wresling Like The Palm Of His Hand)

This past July 4th weekend I went fishing with Professor Tanaka. The only bad thing was every time I turned the other way he ate the bait!

Which reminds me: Why did Japanese Kamikaze pilots wear helmets?

It's nice to see that Evan has a relationship with a woman that's lasted longer than the one between Hitler & Eva Braun.

Those matches I saw last winter at a dog track in Arkansas reminded me of something you'd see in Cuba before the Revolution.

A toss-up question worth $20:

Did you know that Randy Savage played minor league baseball? He also enjoys cooking and long weekends on the beach.

I have a funny feeling about funny feelings.

I recommend a great place Evan & I ate while in Mobile: Billy Ray Bob Tannenbaum's Deli, featuring the Slim Picken's whitefish plater.

Travelling along I-10 we were one big rolling target. But nobody got hurt, nobody got arrested. After our trip we were tired but happy- well tired anyway.

If "Anvil" Jim Neidhart ever retires he could do Thigh Master demonstrations.

There was more pushing and shoving on Bourbon Street wehn I was there than a date with Elizbeth Taylor.

In closing, remember:

There is no Chinese word for "dude."

LETTERS TO WT&N

I enjoyed Diane Devine's article on Ronnie Etchison's career (Editor's note: Issue #25). Ronnie provided years of entertainment for St. Louis fans, and I can still see him apply his "giant swing" to another hapless loser. Like Diane, I too attended his record breaking final match at Kiel Auditorium. As I recall that match I am reminded that pro wrestling has a history, an important, colorful history that has never been adequately documented.

As Vince McMahon Jr.'s promotion crumbles around him, I cannot feel a single pang of sorror. Partially by discarding any sense of wrestling history and by committing another list of damaging errors that I won't now enumerate, pro wrestling is now the travesty that it is. WCW is improving, but who is foolish enough to hold his or her breath!

Anyway, I am always grateful to have enjoyed several decades of Sam Muchnick's St. Louis promotion. Besides seeing Ronnie Etchison's final match, I was also privileged to see Pat O'Connor's retirement match and Dick the Bruiser's final ring appearance.

In closing, let me say that I am enjoying your coverage of the territories; the pieces by Vic Stanley, and the contributions of Ron Dobratz & Stephen Meyerson. Keep up the good work.

DON G. SMITH

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READ "WACKY" IRON MIKE EINHORN IN EACH & EVERY ISSUE OF WT&N!...

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Historic Battles

EVER SINCE the embattled days of Bill Muldoon, before the turn of the century, wrestling has produced thriller vendettas and superhuman performances, grudge matches and gruelling bouts.

The gladiators of the past, though, took more times to settle their fueds. Sometimes this resulted in contests strictly not limited by union hours.

Of all the fierce "shooting" matches in mat history, perhaps none compares with the one put on by William Muldoon and Professor Miller in 1900 at the site of what became the first Madison Square Garden. For nine hours and 35 minutes, they fought it out, and at the end, there was no winner. Here was wrestling skill at its ultimate. Only slightly behind this epic struggle of endurance was the George Bothner-Eugene Timbley Lightweight title tilt. It only took eight hours and 17 minutes before Bothner, then close to 40 years in age, was dethroned, after a 20-year reign.

Shortly before World War I, Strangler Lewis and Joe Stecher stepped behind an Omaha, Nebraska farm, one mild afternoon. Five hours and 45 minutes later, with the desperately straining athletes all but invisible in the dusk, the referee called it a draw. Stecher went into a hospital immediately afterward, suffering complete physical exhaustion. Lewis went to a dance.

In 1934, Jim Londos and Everett Marshall, the onion farmer, went slightly past three hours in Philadelphia, to a draw, and in July of the same year. Londos took four hours and seven minutes, with the same result, against Ed Don George, before 34,000 fans in Boston's Fenway Park.

Stanislaus Zbyszko and the fabulous Hindu, Gama, carried on for 47 minutes past three hours in a London bout, also a draw. (They met again, later, in India, and Gama won in a matter of seconds).

In 1917, after three hours of action, Earl Caddock, the "man of a thousands holds," dumped Joe Stecher in one of wrestling's all-time great thrillers.

Perhaps the most famous matches in the book were the widely-heralded clashes of the great Frank Gotch and the Russian Lion, George Hackenschmidt. As a matter of fact, Gotch was a party to many of the most memorable matches. One of them, swiftest conclusion to a long-anticipated and what loomed like a potential "longie," was the six-second fall he scored on Zbyszko in the first of two falls. Gotch also took the second fall.

Gotch and Hackenschmidt met in what will always be considered the match which commanded the most interest, nationally and internationally. Hack had come over here in 1908, recognized as champion in Europe. In Chicago's Dexter Park Pavilion he and Gotch met to fight it out for world supremacy. Hack was a 5 to 2 favorite that night. But he never did get untracked. After more than two hours, Gotch finally secured the first of the two falls necessary for a victory. Then the Russian Lion signalled the referee that he could not continue.

Great was the mat fans' indignation. Hack claimed he quite because Gotch used oil on his body. As a result, the Russian contended, he was unable to obtain a proper hold. Furthermore, declared George, the oil got into his eyes and nose and made breathing difficult. An international controversy brewed. Gotch denied doing wrong. He raged for the next three years, and then a return match was arranged. Hack injured his leg in training for this one. He was no match for the healthy and able Gotch. Frank scored two straight falls, for undisputed possession of the world championship. It turned out, though, that Gotch was less a businessman than a wrestler. He had insisted on a flat $20,000 for the second bout, instead of a proffered 35% of the gate. The percentage would have netted him $32,918. So. he won the bout—and lost $12,918.

Not much behind in interest in mat history was the return go between Stecher and Strangler Lewis. After they struggled to their famed five-hour draw back of the barn in Omaha, Lewis was forced to wait 13 years to get even with Scissors Joe. The bout steamed up all of New York. Fans clamored to get into the 71st Armory and paid $25 per ticket to watch the Strangler take the world title.

Before finally blowing his title, however, Stecher had a hand in a number of other all-time headline bouts. In 1917 he took on Earl Caddock, who never weighed more than 185 pounds. Caddock tossed Joe in two falls, which consumed three hours. Both went into the World War I armed forces immediately afterward. A year later, they met at the old Garden in a second go-round, and Stecher took back the title he had lost. He held it for ten more years.

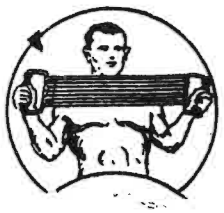
After Lewis took the crown, his most persistent challenger was Jim Londos. Fourteen times, Londos tried—and 14 times Londos lost. But on the fifteenth, and most historic meeting, The Golden Greek made it. This one was fought at Chicago's Wrigley Field before 35,265 fans who poured a record $96,302 into the till —wrestling's biggest gate. Londos scored his most artistic and financial success.

The all-time attendance high, though, is still the 100,000 who jammed the mudflats outside of Bombay, India, to see Zbyszko and the Great Gama. One hundred thousand and not a nickel in gate receipts. Wrestling in India is on that much of an amateur basis. Zbyszko was unable to set himself in the gooey footing. With the word go, Gama simply reached out, enfolded the powerful Pole in a mighty hug, lifted him up, and put him down—and that's all there was to it.

Today's Londos—as a gate-magnet, that is—is Argentina's Antonino Rocca. The agile Italian from South America has been the midas of the mat, almost since his arrival here. In one bout, in 1950, he drew 17,854 who paid $53,000; he drew $46,000 in another and almost $34,000 in a third — phenomenal statistics for modern-day receipts. Yet it remained for Jim Londos, the still-active old Greek warhorse, to produce 1950's biggest single gate, $54,000, when he met Primo Carnera in Chicago.

INTERVIEW WITH ED SHARKEY
By: Ms. Billie Jessee

Q: How long have you been wrestling professionally?
A: I started in 1960 in a carnival for a few years and then I quit for about 10 yrs. Then I went into training and trained a few guys like Jesse Ventura, Bob Backlund. And then I stayed away from wrestling until the Road Warriors talked me into training them and then I got back into the business and have been into it ever since being a promoter, trainer and referee.
Q: Tell us something about your amateur background?
A: Actually, I was a boxer before I was a wrestler. I guess that's where I got a lot of my amateur background in sports. I was trained strickly for a professionl fighter. Then the promoter here died and that's when I decided I wanted to be a wrestler, instead. I really had no amateur background, at all. Just fighting for my life in a carnival. A pretty solid beginning though.
Q: What advise would you give to a young wrestler just beginning in the business?
A: There's so many things but conditioning is everything. You have to train hard, you have to have a good attitude.
Q: Have you ever competed in tt matches?
A: Yes, yes.
Q: How do you compare tt matches to single matches?
A: I like tt matches very much. Some of my tt partners are Rene' Goulet, Reggie Parks, Doug Gilbert. I held tt championships in Az, the western states, with Tito Montez, the Intermountain championship in Salt Lake City.
Q: As a wrestler, what would you say is your strongest point?
A: Speed and condition.
Q: Who has been your toughest opponent?
A: Oh, they still talk about Danny Hodge. He was the greatest Light Hwt Champ of the world. Also, Mad Dog Vachon was the meanest, the Crusher. I've had many, many matches with the Mad Dog but there's so so many good athletes in those days.
Q:Do you feel that the wrestling sport will ever reach the point of having only one world champion?
A: I don't think so. You have too many individuals with their own personalities, their own way of thinking. That's a good thing about wrestling. We're not a team. Everyone's got their own unique ideas...they ALL want to be champions'
Q: Aside from wrestling, what are your hobbies and interests?
A: I read a great deal. History, Cival War books, etc. I've also dealt alot in antiques. I've been in that business 20 some yrs.
Q: What kind of music do you enjoy?
A: Oh, popular and classic. I don't like rock and roll, at all. When I'm on the road, I like to tune in the radio to a good station with classical music. I love it.
Q: Tell us something about your educational background, now?
A: Very limited. The minute I left school, I had the big idea that I was going to Hollywood and be an actor, a professional gambler. Crazy ideas but now that I look back at it, it wasn't that bad. I've had a wonderful life. But, I recommend that all kids stay in school. In those days, we could get away with dropping out of school, now you can't. Times have changed too much. Those days are over.
Q: When and where were you born?
A: I was born in Minnanapolis, MN.
Q When?
A: Feb. 4, 1938.
Q: What made you want to become involved in wrestling ?
A: Well, in those days, wrestlers were like a movie star. I just wanted to become involved in wrestling or boxing. Anything but gainful employment. As a child, I was so lazy...you wouldn't believe.
Q: Who had the biggest influence on your decision to become a pro wrestler?
A: Well, we go way back. The Crusher was a big influence. Malenko was a big influence. Lenny Montana, who played in the Godfather, talked me into going into the business. There are so many nice people I just can't name them all. Wally Karbo and I could name people all day long who had some type of positive influence on me.



BY STEVEN KAPLAN

A SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

Dan Rgnonti is working on an advanced degree at Ed Sharkey's School for Professional Wrestlers. When he talks to prospective students, he says, "If you want to know what it's going to feel like every night you're out there, the first thing you ought to do is stand up on a chair and fall backwards onto a cement floor. That's what it's going to be like every night, so you'd better work out really hard and think about whether you really want to do this."

None of the students looks at all perturbed at the news. They are, for the most part, big—very big, very well-built—and they're sitting around on gym mats raring to go.

Sharkey, 46, has a reputation as one of America's premier wrestling teachers.

Sharkey got his first job in what even he loosely calls "professional" wrestling in Chief Little Wolf's Athletic Show, during the 1960s. The show traveled the Midwest with various carnivals, and it was Sharkey's job to challenge all comers to a three-minute match for a prize of $25. He wrestled up to 10 such matches a night for $3 or $4 a match.

"I could make $30 or $40 a night, and that was pretty good back then," he recalls. "I learned then that size doesn't count for much, but leverage and ability do. I seldom lost a match, because even if these guys were much bigger than me,

Q: Have you wrestled overseas?
A: Oh, yes. Although I haven't been overseas much, I've been mostly to the Middle East, Kuwait.
Q: How would you compare wrestling overseas to here in the US?
A: Well, we wrestled some Pakastanian wrestlers and there is no comparison. They're horrible.
Q: Do you workout?
A: Oh, yes. Well, I've been working out with Gen. Adnan. One day we work endurance and the next day we work with the heavy weights.
Q: How much time do you spend in the gym?
A: Probably about 2 hrs a day, 5 days a wk.
Q: What titles have you held?
A: I held the US Hwt title, which was out of Kansas City, the Western St tt titles, out of Phonix, Intermountain Hwt title, Intermountain tt titles, which was out of Salt Lake City, and a few local titles.
Q: What wrestlers did you admire while growing up?
A: Hard-Boiled Haggerty, the Crusher and so many more I just can't name them all.
Q: Did you pattern your style of wrestling after anyone else?
A: No, I just copied the best that everyone else did and basically that's what wrestling is anyway. I mean, there's only so many basic moves and holds that you can do. They invent new moves but they're basically the same moves with a new twist. You don't realize how hard it is until you've been in there 10 yrs and you're trying to think of something new and you can't.
Q: Do you remember your first pro match?
A: Yes. It was with Otto Von Krump and I was scared to death. It took place in Fargo, ND. Von Krump later became the Great Malenko and he's running a camp down in Florida. now. I somehow survived that first match without fainting in the ring. See, we didn't have camps, then, like we have now. Nowdays, a guy goes through 4-5 months training and he's ready when he goes in. Back then, they just threw you in. My experience in the carnival is the only reason I made it, at all. I don't know how anyone made it in those days.
Q: Did you win your first pro match?
A: No, I was crushed like a grape.
Q: What would you say has been your greatest moment?
A: You know, it's very strange. When I was a kid, I didn't have a lot of money. I used to go to the matches and I never had the money to get in so I would hang around to the back door and I knew alot of the wrestlers, from going to the gym. Hard-Boiled Haggerty, the Kalmikoff Brothers, who were a big influence on me, as well, used to let me in the back door, free. And a few years later, I was wrestling those same people in the same building and that was a wonderful thrill.
Q: What has been your biggest disappointment in your career?
A: Well, wrestling is full of disappointments. You know, one week you make big money and the next you may make nothing but that makes it exciting. Wrestling is NOT boring.
Q: What does it take to be a winner?
A: You got to have the heart. It's got to be inside of you. You have to be able to take the disappointments and you must train, train, train. Train means everything. I see it in the young guys, yet today. Some guys train and make it, others don't make it. Once you get tired and you're laying in the ring...you're dead. It's very easy to get tired in the ring and that's why conditioning is so very important. Just like a boxer. Once his hands get tired and he can't hold his hands up anymore, he's just a punching bag.
Q: What's your favorite finishing move?
A: The dropkick.
Q: Are there any holds or moves you think should be barred from the sport?
A: No, let them fight for their life.
Q: Who were you trained by?
A: I trained myself.
Q: Height?
A: 5'7 1/2
Q: Weight?
A: Around 190 now. When I wrestled, I weighted about 210-215.
Q: Do you think the present economic statis is effecting the attendance at the areans?

they were not in condition. They'd be sitting down in the beer garden, thinking they were tough guys. We'd always get the town bully, and he wouldn't come up until he was full of beer. The challenges were a three-minute match and that doesn't sound like much, but if you've ever tried to wrestle real hard for three minutes, it's very, very hard. So he'd be barfing in the ring and all that, and we'd win, so we wouldn't have to pay him that $25."

From there Sharkey went to work with Verne Gagne and later won many wrestling championships, including the U.S. heavyweight championship and the western states tag-team championship. "After the carnival," he says, "professional wrestling was a snap for me. We only wrestled two or three times a week, and it paid a lot more than the carnival."

As he grew older, Sharkey found jobs to supplement his wrestling career. He worked as a bouncer in many Twin Cities clubs, and it was in one of those that he met the crew who would change his life.

"I was working in a bar called Gramma B's, and the guys I worked with were the toughest bunch of guys I had ever seen in my life. We would stand around talking, and when I'd tell them tales of my wrestling career, they'd tell me they'd like to try wrestling themselves, if they only knew how to do it. Finally they got together and talked me into teaching them how to wrestle."

Among that first class of four people, all Gramma B's bouncers, came the Road Warriors, probably the most successful tag team in wrestling today: Presser Khrushchev, one of the top Russian wrestlers in the world; and Rick Rude, the Texas champion. Later graduates of Sharkey's school include the Terminators, Jesse "The Body"

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

A: Yes, yes, yes, I believe it has in some areas. I have been on tour with the World Wrestling Federation, recently and the houses have never been bigger. It's just unbelieveable. You have to remember that business that flourish during a recession or depression are boxing and wrestling and they will always hold up because the public is very depressed and they want to go somewhere and forget about their troubles.

Q: Who do you think is the top wrestler in the world today?

A: Hulk Hogan. You know, I go by the attendance. When I'm on a show with Hulk Hogan, I come home with a big paycheck. So, to me, he's the best. A lot of people say different. Ric Flair is great, too. But, I make more money being on a show with Hulk Hogan than with anyone.

Q: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

A: I have a brother in Hollywood. He's a director, producer and makes television commercials. Jim Shyman who was recently married at Ceasars' Palace. He also has a pro wrestling hotline in CA. The number is 1-900-820-2010. He's the voice of the hotline. It's really funny about our family. He's never been into wrestling in his life and he's the one that's making all the money, in the wrestling business.

Q: How old are you?

A: 53.

Q: What is your view on cable tv and the ppv's?

A: That's very hard for me to answer. I referee for the WWF and make really good money with them. So, I don't know if it's good, bad or what. Heck, I'm all for it. Whatever the WWF is for, I'm all for it. I just came off the road from last week and my goodness, the money I got at home is wonderful.

Q: What are some of the other organizations that you have worked for?

A: Well, in the last year, I've worked for the NWA, Pro Wrestling America, the LPWA, the WWF and the Windy City Wrestling, just in Illinois, so I guess I do get around.

Q: How would you compare the larger promotions to the independent promotions?

A: Right now, I'm with the WWF and that's the only one I recognize, at all. Because they pay three times as much, when I send my guys down there, they are treated like gentlemen, where the WCW treat them like dirt. I like everyone in that organization but they don't treat the new guys very nice and they should because they are the stars of tomorrow.

Q: Have you ever been hurt by a fan?

A: Oh, God, yes. A fan threw a can into the ring, intended for the other wrestler, and hit me and split my head wide open. I've been hit with chairs, bottles. Back in the '60's, it was much more violent and we didn't have proper police protection. There wasn't lawsuits then. If you punched a spectator, so what...he didn't care and you didn't care. We also got a lot of knifings.

Q: How do you feel about the high rate of alcohol and drug abuse in the sport?

A: Well, I'm against it. I tell all my guys right away that I am very anti-drug, of any type. So consequently, if they are doing anything, I'll never hear about it. They won't tell me. I'm just very, very, very much against it. We ARE professtional athletes and we're not supposed to do that and if you feel you HAVE to do it to stay in the business...then, get out of the business. Now, I've known guys who have taken pain pills...either that or they can't move. They get them from a doctor with a prescription. I know I take a lot of Advil and Motrin, because we all get bad backs and shoulders, after awhile. But, other than that. I've never really seen any drugs being used or abused. Most of the guys that I have broke into the business have a certain amount of respect for me and I appreciate that because I would REALLY be on them if I see or hear of any drugs. I've called a few guys up and really gave them a hard time.

Q: Do you think more athletes are turning to steriods and drugs because of stiffer demands that are put on them like their performance, traveling or the competition?

Ventura, Bob Backland, Savannah Jack and the Warlord. After graduation, these guys went across the country and the world spreading the word about Sharkey's school.

Today Sharkey has all the students he can handle. He is planning to open branches of his school in Texas and, eventually, Japan.

Semesters at the school run approximately three months, and tuition is $3,000. Classes run two hours, three days a week, and the emphasis is on body building and road work (running and endurance exercises). Sharkey also teaches such things as promotion, publicity and showmanship. "I do what I can in that area," he says, "but they really have to acquire that themselves. Everybody has their own flair and sense for showmanship. Some very good wrestlers are very dull wrestlers. Most wrestlers are natural showoffs anyway, so they just need to learn how to promote themselves."

About 15 people attend Sharkey's school this term, including four women. One of his students, 19-year-old Danielle Moore, is a 5-foot 4-inch blonde. "I used to wrestle with my brothers," she says, "and I really liked the challenge. My folks were always telling me to go to school after I graduated from high school, but when I enrolled here, they weren't too happy. When I first came here I didn't know anything, but I've been studying a few months, and Eddy thinks I'm ready to try getting in the ring. I haven't got a name or a personality to wrestle under yet, but I know I want to be a good guy. Good guys always get the better revenge."

▷

A: Oh, sure. How can you go on a couple hours sleep and perform like that. It's in all sports. They're just asking too much from the top stars, now. Instead of having 100 guys on the road, they should have 200 on the road and that way they could give some of those guys some days off.

Q: Do you think the wrestlers should be subjected to drug test from the promoters?

A: I think that should be up to the promoter. It's a shame it's gotten to that. I don't care, either way. If they have to do it to protect their business, the promoters has to do it. He's got a lot of money invested there. I guess it's got to the point where they have to. They waited and waited and tried and tried and tried not to do it. Now, I understand the drug test is really strict.

Q: Who is your favorite singer?

A: I change every week. Probably Garth Brooks. Whoever has the popular song out, at the time.

Q: What are your favorite foods?

A: Chicken and fish.

Q: What personality traits do you look for in a person.

A: Honesty and honor. Without honor, in the wrestling business, you're nothing. If I catch a guy who lies, is a theif in the dressing room, in my organization, Pro Wrestling America, I refuse to use them. I think that is one reason I have been so successful here and been so lucky to have so many good guys. I surround myself with good people and smart people because I don't have a great education but if I surround myself with intelligent people, no one will know the difference. So, without honor, you're nothing. And another thing, we work a lot with kids, here in MN. We have Charlie Norris, who is full-time working with kids. His life is totally devoted with working with others. Tommy Ferrera is another one. That's all they do. They are strong and honorable people. Not only physically strong, you have to be mentally strong. You have to take the good times and the bad. Because the bad times are sure to come. I'm a fanatic at that.

Q: What are you immediate plans?

A: My immediate plans are to build Pro Wrestling America. We've opened up Iowa with tremendous success. We had one show last month with 1500 in attendance, which was mostly kids. But, that's what we are trying to do...get the kids off the street. We have terrible gang problems. They're killing each other, like in the larger cities. We are now working on getting PWA into Nevada. We were there last year and we just want to expand and make more money but mainly help our young people.

Q: What is the name and address of your organization?

A: Pro Wrestling America
6217 Chowen
Edina, MN 55410

I also work alot with Brad Rheigans, who is a great trainer. In fact, the Road Warriors are out there helping him train some of the guys, now.

Q: Ed, thank you so much for taking the time from your busy schedule to give us this interview. We wish you the very best.

A: Billie, it's been my pleasure. Anytime.

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Sunday, September 22, 1968, 8:00 P.M.

Main Event: Return Match For U. S. Championship

ED SHARKEY Minneapolis, Minn. U.S. Champion	vs.	GIL HAYES Detroit, Mich. Challenger

---

Semi-Final: For Iowa Tag Team Championship.

RIPPER DANIELS Minneapolis, Minn. and **KILLER KOWALSKI** Minneapolis, Minn.	vs.	RONNIE ETCHISON Santa Monica, Calif. and RUBEN LOPEZ Jurez, Mexico

---

Added Attraction: Girls

PRINCESS LITTLE CLOUD Seminole, Okla.	vs.	MAE YOUNG Hollywood, Calif.

Opener

RIPPER DANIELS Minneapolis, Minn.	vs.	RUBEN LOPEZ Juarez, Mexico

---

BY: NORMAN KIETZER

FROM 1968 PROGRAM

Gene Kiniski may still be the Wolrd Champion, but the success story of 1968 as far as professional wrestling is concerned is Eddie Sharkey, who hold's the second most coveted title in National Wrestling Alliance ranking, the United States Heavyweight Championship which is the symbol of being the No.

One Challenger for the World Championship. Sharkey has never faced Kiniski, but the World Champ can hardly continue to deny his top challenger now that Eddie has won the coveted U.S. belt. This is the same title held so long and so well by such men as Pat O'Connor, Ronnie Etchison, Jack Donovan, Bob Brown, The Viking, and The Destroyer.

Sharkey however is not in the style of these men. He is, according to wrestling standards, a small man. But what he lacks in size he more than makes up for in speed and agility. Sharkey has wrestled all over the United States the past five years. He has become one of the greatest matmen because he knows more wrestling holds and grips than 90% of today's professionals. Against all odds this "little" man has proved that the drop kick, the flying head-scissors, and other speed oriented manouvers are more than a match for a slower scientific star or for a rule-bending villian.

In Iowa tonight he faces the challenger of the great Gil Hayes. He has already defended the title successfully against Hayes, as well as Ronnie Etchison and Nature Boy. Next in line in the Iowa territory for a shot at the title are such men as Dick the Bruiser, Killer Kowalski, The Viking, Ripper Daniels, Bob Geigel, Bob Brown, and Sonny Myers.

Sharkey has a long road to continue on if he plans to successfully defend his title against all of these men, but the great improvement witnessed in this young Minnesotan this year already makes us predict that he continues to improve at the same rate he will not only defeat all of his challengers, but he will also give Gene Kiniski the battle of his life if those two should ever meet for the world title.

And as for fans, well there is none more popular than Sharkey. Wherever he has wrestled he has become one of the favorites for Sharkey is one of the great persons who loves his public, and they return in kind to him.

Today, Eddie Sharkey is a truely great United States Heavyweight Champion. Tomorrow, he could become a truely great World Champion.

RESULTS: Cedar Rapids, 9/8/68, Ronnie Etchison defeated Roger Kirby in a death match. Eddie Sharkey defeated Gil Hayes. Princess Little Cloud defeated Betty Niccoli, Jean Antone, Kay Noble, and Carmen Monge, to win the girls battle royal. Kay Noble drew with Princess Little Cloud. Jean Antone defeated Betty Niccoli via disq. Waterloo, 9/14/68, Princess Little Cloud def. Betty Niccoli-disq. Killer Kowalski defeated Stan Moos. Sonny Myers drew Texas Bob Geigel. Dick the Bruiser def The Viking. Eddie Sharkey defeated Ronnie Etchison-disq. Both men had a fall when Ed tried a flying tackle off the ropes. Etchison caught him and tried a body slam. Ronnie lost his footing and Sharkey fell over the top rope for a automatic disqualification.

STAR TREK VII: AMOK WRESTLING TIME BY: EDDIE GOLDMAN, NYC

setting: Mr. Spock's quarters aboard the Enterprise

KIRK (at door): May I come in, Spock?
SPOCK: Whooooooo!!! To be the Vulcan you've got to beat the Vulcan!
KIRK: Spock, is something wrong?
SPOCK: [Sighs] Captain, have you ever wondered how we Vulcans choose our REAL World Wrestling Heavyweight Champion?
KIRK: Well, Spock, I just assumed you did it ... logically.
SPOCK: No, Captain, no. We Vulcans in our ancient times were an uncivilized warrior race. Today we retain these traits and rituals in only two areas, but they are most important: sex and wrestling.
KIRK: I know about your crazy marriage rituals, Spock. That's a classic episode, you know.
SPOCK: Yes, CAptain. I still watch it frequently on my video tri-corder.
KIRK: But how does the title change hands on Vulcan?
SPOCK: By ref bumps, stunning your opponent with your phaser, and ears on the ropes.
KIRK: How do they get away with it?
SPOCK: A sympathetic member of the Vulcan Council diverts the referee at the appropriate moment. The damage is irreversible. By Vulcan custom, the referee's decision is final and cannot be reversed.
KIRK: But isn't that illogical, Spock?
SPOCK: Even on Vulcan there are marks, Captain.
KIRK: OK, OK. None of this explains why you are acting so strange.
SPOCK: Captain, there is one other thing you must know. Since all wrestling on Vulcan has come under the control of the Federation, titles only change hands on pay per views.
KIRK: Spock, the Federation has nothing to do with wrestling.
SPOCK: I did not make myself clear, Captain. I do not mean the United Federation of Planets, but the Worlds Wrestling Federation headed by Vince McMahon XV.
KIRK: Oh. But Spock, won't the Vulcan fans figure this out and, logically, stop going to the house shows?
SPOCK: Correct, Captain. That is why the promoters are booking more frequent title changes and thus more pay per views to replenish their depleted credits.
KIRK: So why is this making you act so mad?
SPOCK: Because, Captain, there are two pay per views coming up by the next stardate. Therefore I MUST get back to Vulcan!
KIRK: Why not watch them on the Federation's Satellite Hologram Channel?
SPOCK: They're not carrying them, Captain. Something about a low buy rate.
KIRK: So remotely set your video tri-corder on Vulcan to record them and transmit them to the Enterprise.
SPOCK: Captain, even I, your Chief Science Officer, cannot figure out how to program that thing.
KIRK: What kind do you have?
SPOCK: I believe it's a Clingon.
KIRK: Hmmmm. Well, I guess that leaves us no choice. [Pulls out communicator.] Bridge, this is the Captain.
VOICE: This is Sulu, sir.
KIRK: Change heading of the ship to planet Vulcan, Warp 9, pronto! Whoooo!

FROM GARY WILL & ROYAL DUNCAN

ENJOY NEW TITLE HISTORIES EACH MONTH IN WT&N!!!

NWA	6-Man Tag Team Title	
84/12	Ivan Koloff & Nikita Koloff & Don Kernodle Awarded Ivan Koloff & Nikita Koloff & Krusher Krushchev	
86/05/17	Dusty Rhodes & Road Warriors: Hawk & Animal Defeat Ivan Koloff & Nikita Koloff & Baron Von Raschke	Baltimore
88/02/12	Ivan Koloff & Powers of Pain: Barbarian & Warlord Defeat Rhodes & Hawk & Paul Ellering	Philadelphia
88	VACANT Powers of Pain jump to the WWF	
88/07/09	Dusty Rhodes & Road Warriors: Hawk & Animal [2] Defeat Ric Flair & Arn Anderson & Tully Blanchard	Chicago
88/12/07	Road Warriors (Hawk & Animal) & Genichiro Tenryu Animal defeats Dusty Rhodes	Chattanooga
89	TITLE ABANDONED	

Pro Wrestler Tojo Yamamoto dead

Tojo Yamamoto, a popular figure in professional wrestling for many years, died early Wednesday morning, February 19 at his Nashville residence from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, according to a Nashville police department report.

According to the police report, Yamamoto had been in failing health recently. The only note he left was to his apartment manager thanking him for his kindness to the wrestler.

Yamamoto, 56, began his wrestling career at the age of 18 and became a favorite of pro wrestling fans at the Memorial Auditorium during the promotion era of the late Nick Gulas. Recently, he had been wrestling in the Memphis area.

"Tojo Remembered"

By David Williamson

It was with surprise, and sadness, that I listened to the Chattanooga TV sports announcer last night, Wednesday, February 19, 1992. He reported the news that long time pro wrestler Tojo Yamamoto had died earlier in the day at his home in Nashville.

It's hard to believe that Tojo is dead. For over twenty years, I've watched the short, bald, heavy set Oriental grappler in countless matches, interviews, and out of ring brawls. Most of that time I saw him in the Tennessee area, though I kept up with him some in other areas.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

MY FIRST MATCH: BY STUART BRYNIEN

Thumbing through some old wrestling programs the other day, I was reminded of the very first show I ever attended. It was in 1983, at Madison Square Garden, and my brand-new girlfriend (who has since become my wife) had asked me along on one of her visits to the "Mecca of Professional Wrestling"; she was a bit of a regular at the Garden back then. Backlund was still champ--he had been for years--and he was wrestling, I believe, The Masked Superstar.

There are several things I remember about that night. Of course, I was pretty excited; I had been following wrestling on T.V. for years, but had never been able to find anyone willing to go with me to the Garden. Now, though--now that I was there, front row mezz, live and in the flesh--the notion that I was about to watch grapplers in action not just for one hour (the length of the typical mat show on the tube), not just for two hours, but for three whole hours, got the old engine revved up pretty good.

And I do mean revved up. I must admit that way back then I was not adverse to exercising my vocal cords. Now that I'm older, and mellower, (and a lot less cavalier about risking injury to my vocal cords,) I throw my two cents in very infrequently at live events, if at all; I just watch the matches, make quiet little comments now and then, and take notes (lots of notes). But at that first show, and, come to think of it, at quite a few of the Garden shows that followed, I was crazed. Not as crazed as some of the hardcores at ringside, but no shrinking violet, either. I cheered the faces. I booed the heels. During Backlund's match, I screamed encouragement at him and barbs at his opponent; when Backlund won (as he always did), I was as enthusiastic with my applause as everyone else. I didn't even mind that by the end of the show I was starting to sound like Rod Stewart with laryngitis.

Something else I remember, and this is significant: the arena that night wasn't half-full, or two-thirds full; it was completely full. Of course, this was before cable, and over-saturation, and the backlash against Vince and the WWF; this was when the monthly house show was still a treat, something to look forward to (and no one looked forward to it more than yours truly; usually, the show I was at was hardly over before I was already getting excited about the next one). But whatever the reason for the capacity crowd that night, it was a bigger crowd than I ever dreamed I'd see.

Twenty thousand screaming wrestling fans in one place. Quite a sight.

And for the first time in my life, I was one of them--and pretty darned happy about it!

In the 1960's Tojo wrestled in Texas as T.Y. Chung, while in the Carolinas, Yamamoto was known as P.Y. Chung. When in Tennessee in the 60's, Tojo was a very much hated grappler and many times the crafty Japanese star had the equally hated manager "Gentlemen" Saul Weingeroff, in his corner. This just made the fans hate Tojo more.

In time, though, Tojo Yamamoto became a fan favorite and the fans would go wild as the wily Japanese wrestler would judo chop his way through a variety of opponents. The 1970's saw Tojo use a variety of young wrestlers to create very popular tag teams. Some of the men Tojo helped train and start making a name for themselves were Jerry Jarrett, Tommy Rich, and Bobby Eaton.

The 1980's saw Tojo switch sides back and forth, sometimes cheered, but, mostly booed. The mid 80's even saw, for a short time, the renewal of a twenty year old feud between Yamamoto and the "Fabulous One" Jackie Fargo. It brought back memories of the mid and late 60's when Tojo had wild feuds with Fargo, Len Rossi, Mario Milano, Tex Riley, Ken Lucas, and many others.

Most of the 80's and early 90's saw the seasoned veteran don the "manager's hat", as Tojo guided many unpopular grapplers. Though he lost almost all of his ability towards the twilight of his career, he was still fun to watch and still good at interviews.

Sadly now, though, Tojo Yamamoto won't even be around to be booed. A real wrestling legend, especially here in the Tennessee region, he will be missed. I'm grateful that I have a number of his bouts from the 70's and 80's on tape. SAYONARA, TOJO!

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LOS ANGELES TIMES
VALLEY NEWS
F/ SATURDAY, JULY 13, 1991

AROUND THE VALLEY / BY RICH TOSCHES

Museum May Floor Fans of Heavyweight Wrestling History

The museum door swung open and the curator welcomed the guest inside, where he gouged the visitor's eyes, picked him up by the neck and crotch and slammed him onto the lobby carpet. Climbing onto his desk, he plunged, knees first, onto the stunned man's midsection and then hoisted a folding chair and . . . .

OK, OK. None of that stuff *really* happened.

But maybe it should have.

Because this is a visit to the World Wrestling Museum and Hall of Fame.

The museum can be found tucked inside Slammers Wrestling Gym, in the genteel section of Sun Valley, hard by the auto junkyards (including the interestingly named Hooper's Rear End Exchange). The gym is home to a school called Slam U, offering training for those who dream of the day they can get paid for having a 375-pound berserker sit upon their heads and tie vital organs into square knots.

The museum, which has attracted about 500 visitors in two years, consists of six glass display cases and rows of posters trumpeting fights across the nation.

One from the 1930s advertises a battle in downtown Yuma between the Yellow Terror and Alex Kasboski. Other posters feature the legends of the sport, including 500-pound Haystack Calhoun, whose wrestling ability consisted pretty much of falling onto an opponent who failed to foresee the negative aspects of lying down in front of a man who weighed a quarter of a ton.

Also growling from the posters are Bobo Brazil, that head-butting maniac; champion Bruno Sammartino, the Italian monster who is now a wrestling broadcaster; Apache Pistol Pete; Buddha Khan, and others who never met a headlock they didn't like.

More than a hundred photographs of wrestlers, most of them signed by the terminators themselves, line the walls, each with a message to Slammers Gym. Wild woman Suzie Sexton, posing with a scowl on her face and wearing a wrestling gown with a neckline that plunges just short of her wrestling boots, urges admirers to "Slam This! Love, Suzie."

There is Abdullah the Butcher, his head bleeding profusely from what appears to have been a direct hit by a cruise missile.

There is a frothing man called The Beast, reminding everyone to "Stay Mean," as he crushes a human skull in his hands. The Beast is old and retired now. Lives in a condo in Florida.

Hey, even Beasts slow down.

There is the grotesquely hulking Zeus, the kind of guy who probably misjudges a door on occasion and opens it from the hinged side. There is George (The Animal) Steele, whose entire body *except* for his head is covered in thick, black hair and who made the following thoughtful notation on his photo: "Hey Slammers."

And there is Norman The Lunatic, who looks aptly named, in a wild-eyed pose and hair that seems to have been last trimmed by a horrible lumber mill accident. Norman The Lunatic is wearing hospital psychiatric unit clothing and two different shoes, but still had the presence of mind to note on his picture, "To Slammers Gym. Best Wishes, Norman."

Lunatics say the sweetest things.

But the real attraction in the museum is the wing devoted entirely to one man. The one, the only, that 250-pound package of muscle and women's underwear, Gorgeous George.

It was George who single-handedly (a manicured hand, by the way) changed wrestling from a sport in which slobbering men with big necks pounded each other somewhat senseless into what it is today—a spectacle in which men and women and midgets with big necks and publicity agents and makeup and sequined costumes go through the motions of pounding each other somewhat senseless.

"There was only one Gorgeous George," enthuses Verne Langdon, owner of Slammers and a pro wrestling instructor. Langdon, a bright and articulate man in his late 40s who got into the spirit of the thing by letting his hair grow past his shoulders and dying it blonde, founded the gym and the museum in 1989. He speaks in reverent tones of all of the grapplers who have knee-dropped their way across history.

But Gorgeous George rose above them all.

Nicknamed "The Human Orchid" (as if a guy who legally changed his name from George Wagner to Gorgeous George needed a *nickname)*, Gorgeous sent the machismo of the 1940s into shock when he first appeared, his dyed-blond hair set in beautiful waves and his body covered in lacy, frilly gowns, dresses and robes. This guy made Liberace look like a New York City sewer worker coming off a 12-hour underground shift, and paved the way for gender-bending entertainers for years to come, from Alice Cooper to Boy George.

One photo captures Gorgeous in full splendor, blond hair permed and waved, nails polished, a stunning orchid pinned to a three-tiered, white lace gown. It could be a promotion picture for the film, "Prom Dates From Hell."

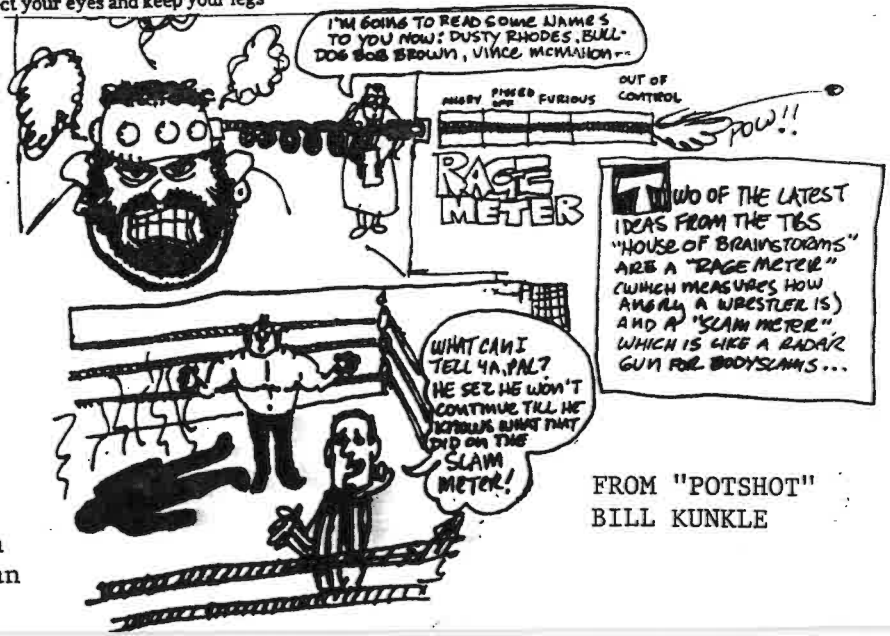
But gosh, how this delicately dressed fella could wrestle! "He was the best," Langdon said. "Simply the best. No one could touch him."

Of course, dressed as he was, only a homicidal *couturier* would want to touch him.

Enshrined in a glass case is a purple silk robe adorned by hand-painted orchids, the robe Gorgeous George was wearing when he died at 42 in a Los Angeles hospital on Christmas Day, 1963, leaving the world of American sports a much different place than he found it.

"This place is unique," said Langdon. "It is the only place of its kind in the world. It is the Smithsonian Institute of wrestling."

And if you want to argue with him, just give him a minute to climb onto the top rope. And you might want to protect your eyes and keep your legs together.


I'M GOING TO READ SOME NAMES TO YOU NOW: DUSTY RHODES, BULLDOG BOB BROWN, VINCE MCMAHON--
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WHAT CAN I TELL YA, PAL? HE SEZ HE WON'T CONTINUE TILL HE KNOWS WHAT THAT DID ON THE SLAM METER!

FROM "POTSHOT"
BILL KUNKLE

By
Jason
Conlan

Thanks to Cody Boyns (990 AM WALE Sun. 8-10 in Providence RI) & Dave Schwartz & Crew (90.3 FM WBAU- Sat. 1-3 PM in Garden City, N.Y.) for having me on their shows!